

James Bridger scouted on the western frontier for the United States government, and helped map the historic Oregon Trail.
Drawing by Frederic Remington, Indiana Archive



the Bozeman Trail, about 600 miles (970 kilometers) from Fort Laramie, Wyo., to Virginia City, Mont. Bridger was born in Richmond, Va., the son of an innkeeper. He died near Kansas City. Howard R. Lamar



COLONEL BRIDGER

"But the fact that Bridger made his way down the Bear River in a boat, which would necessarily have been before the stream froze over in the fall, is proof that Bridger reached the shores of the Great Salt Lake before Provot did and before any of the other mountain men.

"After weighing all available evidences, it seems definite that James Bridger was the first white man to see Utah's inland sea, and so history affirms that he was the discoverer of the Great Salt Lake," Mr. Madsen concluded.

Mountain Men in Utah, 1824-1825

"Well, to continue with the story of the mountain men in Utah," the teacher remarked, "after Jim Bridger returned to Sublette's camp, the group continued trapping to their sources the streams that flow into Cache Valley. The trappers finally settled into winter quarters, probably in some such sheltered place as the mouth of Logan Canyon or Blacksmith's Fork where food could be found for their animals.

"When the spring of 1825 came, all the employees of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, including Smith's and Provot's parties, trapped on the Wasatch streams at least as far south as Utah



Jim Bridger

"While trapping on the Weber River in May, the 29 Hudson's Bay employees (previously mentioned) joined the American trappers and two months later sold their furs to Ashley.

"In June when the mountain men were in Utah Valley, they received word through a courier to assemble with their furs for the purpose of meeting General Ashley, who was at that time making his way across Utah."

General Ashley visits Utah, 1825

"I have been wondering, sir, just when and how the trappers sold their beaver furs," John Brown remarked.

"Yes," Mr. Madsen answered, "I must tell you about that part of the life of the mountain men. Of course their complete purpose in being here was to make money from furs. You recall, the trappers were working for the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, and so it was the company's duty to pay the trappers for their furs and furnish them supplies.

"For these purposes William H. Ashley came to Utah in 1825. He left